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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DAR ES SALAAM 001270

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E, AF/C, AND PRM

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SUBJECT: JUNE UPDATE ON REFUGEE SITUATION

REF: DAR ES SALAAM 00686

1. (U) Summary: In its monthly briefing, UNHCR reported that for the first time in decades the number of refugees it assisted in Tanzania had decreased to less than 400,000 with an estimated 398,500 refugees currently in the country. The monthly meeting with the joint diplomatic corps and NGOs included updates from the World Food Program (WFP) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The UNHCR noted that, following communal elections in Burundi, voluntary repatriations continue to remain steady and may even be increasing. However, WFP reports that because of resource shortfalls, the organization currently provides refugees with the lowest ration level since 2003. Donor country representatives also discussed a recent positive rhetorical shift from the Government of Tanzania (GOT) regarding refugees. End Summary.

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Refugee Movement and Security Update  
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2.(U) As of 20 June, UNHCR estimates there are 398,500 refugees in Tanzania. This number includes 240,381 Burundians; 155,026 Congolese; 165 Rwandese; 2,898 Somalis and 2,042 other nationalities. In May, an estimated 2,054 Burundians repatriated voluntarily. This was partially offset, however, by 485 documented Burundian asylum seekers in Kibondo. The Burundians claimed to have fled insecurity in Burundi's northern province of Kirundo. Other May arrivals included approximately 400 Rwandan refugees who claimed to be running from Tutsis but ostensibly are evading the Gacaca courts. UNHCR representative Mia B'low-Olsen does not expect additional refugees from Rwanda; the number that has entered matches reports from UNHCR-Burundi of those that have not returned to their home areas in Rwanda.

3.(U) UNHCR reported two serious security incidences in the past month. One case involved the death of a police officer and a refugee in the Mtendeli camp on 19 June 2005. UNHCR has requested the Ministry of Home Affairs to investigate the attacks and they have agreed to do so. UNHCR indicated these two incidents probably do not reflect any new pervasive anti-refugee sentiment within the refugee affected area, however they have dispatched the UN Security advisor from Ghana for further consultation.

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Food Security Remains an Issue  
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4. (U) WFP reports that due to resource shortfalls, they currently provide refugees with only 1,252 Kcal per day. This constitutes the lowest ration level since 2003. This shortfall resulted in maize being distributed at 75% of the normal level and pulses, corn-soya blend (CSB) and vegetable oil being distributed at 50% the normal ration. WFP forecasts these shortfalls to continue through July and August, at the very least, but they will probably last well after that. Despite this bleak outlook, Mie Kataoka, Logistics Officer for WFP, publicly acknowledged during the meeting the June 1 in-kind contribution from USAID valued at \$2,142,700 and thanked the USG for its generosity.

5. (U) WFP briefing documents indicate the following forecasted pipeline breaks: maize in October; CSB and salt in July. In all, the WFP forecasts a shortfall of 16,028 metric tons (MT), the equivalent of \$7.4 million, up to the end of January 2006. The total committed budget for the 2005-2006 operational year is projected to be \$29.5 million. The USG is by far the top contributor to the Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO), with donations valued at \$17,207,757.

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Tanzania Celebrates World Refugee Day  
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16. (U) UNHCR commemorated World Refugee Day on June 20 with activities in Chogo, the Somali refugee settlement in Handeni District, and the Tanga Region. As a center-piece of the celebrations, the Minister of Home Affairs, Hon. Omar Ramadhan Mapuri, handed over naturalization certificates to 44 Somali refugee families who had resettled; 182 individuals in all. In addition to the ceremony, the new citizens received training from UNHCR informing them of their rights and obligations as Tanzanian citizens.

17. (U) Despite this step forward, the immediate and successful assimilation of these newly minted citizens is uncertain. The representative from the Canadian High Commission expressed his hope they might be allowed to exercise the right to vote in the October elections. While doubtful they would be allowed to vote in October, UNHCR was unsure and promised to follow-up with regional authorities about registering them to vote.

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Shift in Tanzanian Refugee Policy?  
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18. (SBU) The UNHCR officials thought that the Tanzanian Government was easing its previous hard line on refugees. UNHCR representatives reported that five regional commissioners attended a training workshop on protection. The training included discussions about protection gaps. The UNHCR urged the Tanzanian Government participants to reconsider refugee policy, and allow refugees to find ways to be self-sufficient. UNHCR is confident these discussions led to a slight relaxation in the regional and local government refugee policy, which then led to the very public ceremony announcing the Somali naturalizations.

19. (SBU) Comment: For now, the Tanzanian government does not appear to be in any hurry to pull away the welcome mat. The UNHCR's workshop probably helped encourage Tanzania's continued hospitality; the steady repatriation of the Burundian refugees probably helped even more. For the first time in years, it seems that an end to the Burundian refugee crisis is in sight. The Somali naturalizations are another good step forward, marking Tanzania's status as a destination for refugee resettlement, as well as a country of first asylum. End comment.

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